

**A
HISTORY
OF
ST. PETER'S CHURCH
MENDOTA, MINNESOTA**

PUBLISHED ON THE OCCASION OF THE
DEDICATION OF OUR NEW PLACE OF WORSHIP

**OCTOBER 1974
REVEREND JOHN T. BAUER
PASTOR**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A history of a parish begins not with its official establishment nor with its first resident pastor, but with all the factors which fostered its foundation and development . . . the natural environment and resources of the area, events in secular history and countless other items. Our scope does not allow us to study all these aspects in detail, and yet we cannot simply pass them by. Consequently, we will start with a brief description of the inhabitants before the first white man entered what is now Dakota County and proceed from there.

The Dakota Indians were the natives of this area centuries before the first white man came. The name Dakota means "allied" or "joined together". It is similar, in a sense, to the motto we have on our coins, *e pluribus unum*. When the French arrived they named them Sioux, a name taken from the last syllable of the Ojibway's title for them.

Evidently the Dakotas hunted and fished in this vicinity from time immemorial, trekking through the forests in search of game, eventually establishing villages and living, according to our standards, a simple unsophisticated life.

The first white man to enter what is now Dakota County was Father Louis Hennepin, a Franciscan priest. In 1680 he left Fort Crevecoeur near Lake Peoria with two companions, Anthony Auguelle and Michael Accault, to explore the Mississippi. Unfortunately, the Sioux were at war with the Illinois nation at the time, and overtaking the small party of whites on April 11, held them captive. As prisoners, Hennepin and his companions continued to explore the Mississippi, utilizing the time to preach the message of Christianity to their captors. Daniel Greysolon

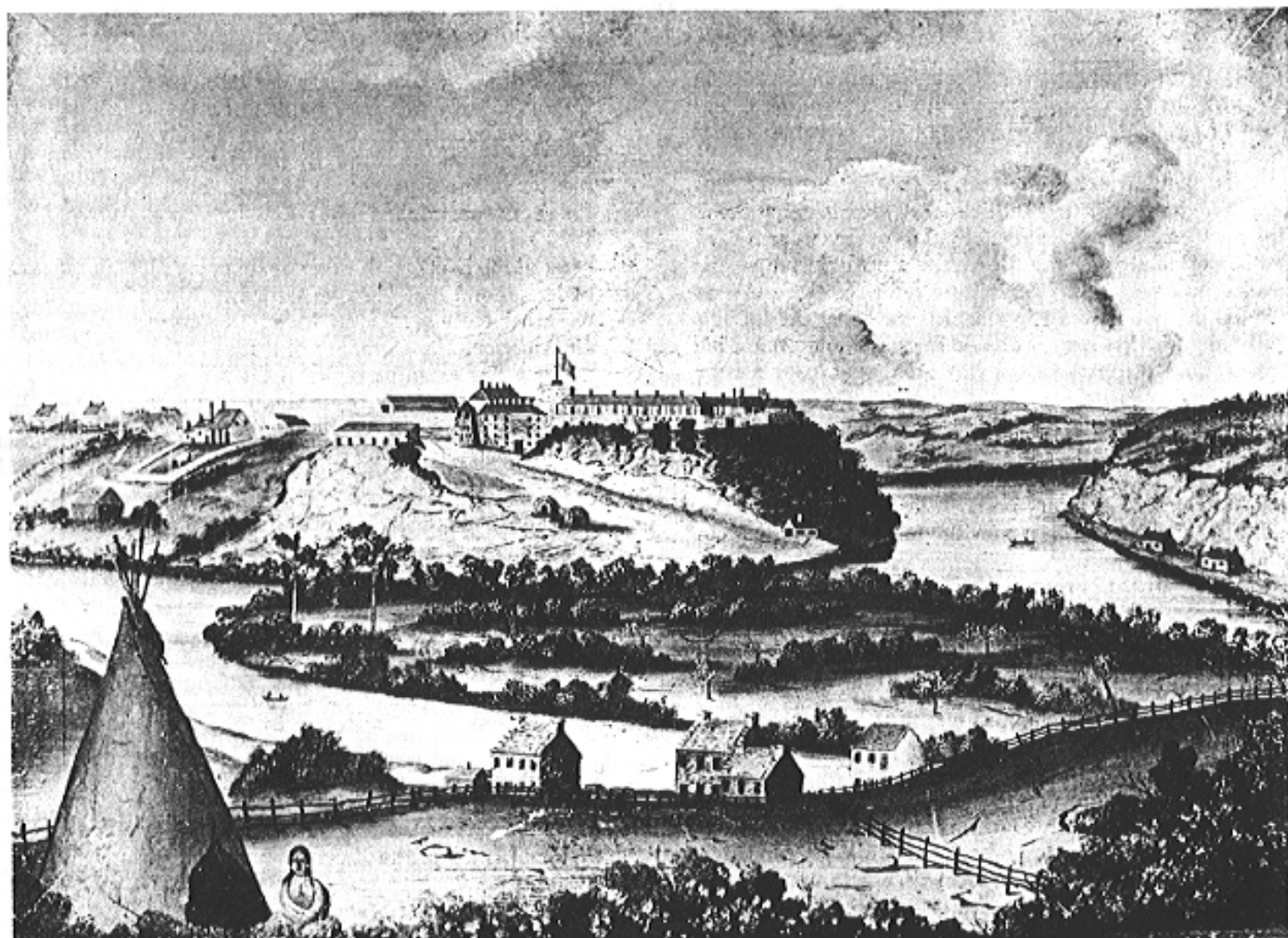


Father Hennepin among the Indians

Duluth, who had spent about two years in the area of Lake Superior, heard about the white captives and set out to find them. On July 25, 1680, he located Father Hennepin and convinced the Indians to release the captives.

Hennepin's discoveries attracted much attention to the area. In 1689 Nicholas Perrot erected a fort on Lake Pepin and took possession of the territory in the name of France.

In 1700, Pierre Charles LeSeuer explored the present Dakota County. He had built a fort on Prairie Island (between Hastings and Red Wing) and explored the surrounding area apparently searching for copper ore. LeSeuer was the last official French explorer of this region. Thereafter the French confined their investigation further



Fort Snelling and Old Mendota



Old Mendota

A. St. Peter's original church

B. Sibley House

north. By the treaty between Great Britain and France in 1763 all the territory within the limits of Wisconsin and Minnesota, east of the Mississippi was ceded to Great Britain.

Jonathan Carver, a Connecticut native, explored this area for the British in 1766. He described in some detail the St. Pierre River, so named by the voyageurs and used indiscriminately for the river, the future fort and the trading post that was built here later. In 1852 it was named the Minnesota River, which was what the Indians had called it. It seems probable from this time that lone traders and trappers visited this area, stayed for a time and moved on again.

The first major breakthrough toward permanent settlement took place in 1805 when Zebulon M. Pike came here to negotiate a treaty with the Indians for acquiring land to establish military posts. A large tract of land was acquired, part of which is now the townships of Mendota and Egan.

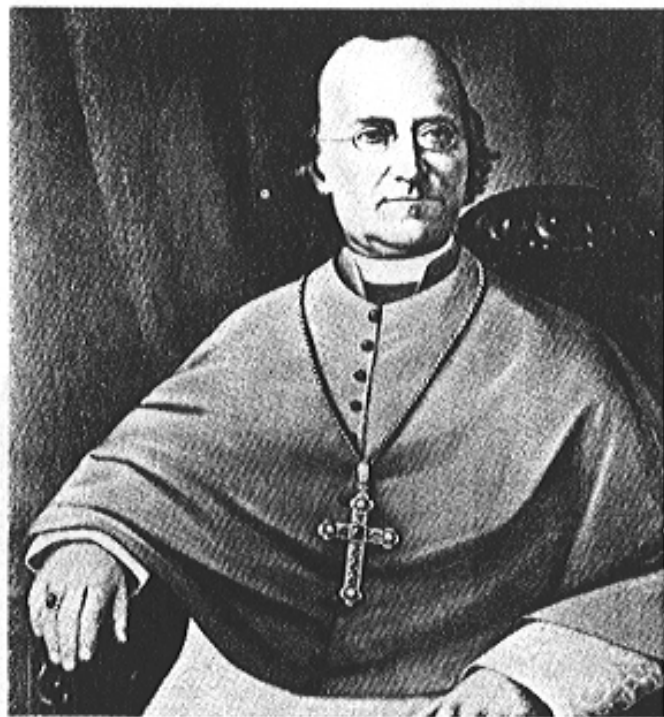
The War of 1812 precluded military expansion here, but in 1819, Lt. Colonel Henry Leavenworth built a fort on some of the land acquired by Pike. In August, 1820, Colonel Josiah Snelling, after whom the fort was named, replaced Colonel Leavenworth. The presence of Fort Snelling was of great importance for a permanent settlement here and in the surrounding area. Trappers and traders gravitated toward it, for it offered both companionship and protection.

By 1820, for example, Duncan Campbell is reported to have established a trading post at Mendota, later locating it near St. Anthony Falls. P. Lamont is also said to have been a licensed trader operating in this area in 1826, and at about this same time, Alexis Bailly established a trade depot for the American Fur Company.

The first person to have actually been a settler in Dakota County was Jean Baptiste Faribault. Though he, too, was a trader, he brought his family with him and broke and cultivated land. By 1805 he was trading with the Indians of the area and in 1820 he built a log cabin at Pike's Island (named after Zebulon Pike). However, in 1822 his home was flooded and so he moved to the east bank of the river. High water again compelled him to seek better ground and 1826 he settled at Mendota. Many of the other early settlers at Mendota were connected with the American Fur Company or traded at this outpost. This was true for example of Vetal Guerin who came from a company of voyageurs from Montreal and began to till the soil, and of Henry H. Sibley who in 1834 took charge of the post at Mendota acting as an agent of the American Fur Company.

In 1837 the officers at Fort Snelling took a census counting 157 inhabitants. About 75 of these were living on the Mendota side of the river, including those at the fur company's establishment.

That same year a new diocese had been established by the Holy See, the Diocese of Dubuque. This diocese was immense as it originally stood. It reached northward from the northern line of Missouri to the boundary of British America and westward from the Mississippi River to the Missouri. It included what is now the state of Iowa, all of Minnesota west of the Mississippi, and large portions of North and South Dakota. In 1838 Bishop Mathias Loras, the first bishop of this diocese, journeyed through France speaking to seminarians about the need for missionary priests in the United States. His efforts met with some success, for he obtained seven recruits to return to the new diocese with him. Among them Augustine Ravoux, Lucien



**Right Reverend Mathias Loras,
first bishop of Dubuque.**

Galtier and Joseph Cretin. The first two mentioned were to be future pastors at St. Peter's, and the third the first Bishop of St. Paul.

In 1839 Bishop Loras visited the vicinity of Fort Snelling to acquaint himself with the area and its inhabitants. Later he wrote of this journey.

I left Dubuque on the 23rd of June, on board a large and magnificent steam vessel, and was accompanied by the Abbe Pelamourgues and a young man, who served as interpreter with the Sioux. After a successful voyage of some days along the superb Mississippi and the beautiful Lake Pepin, we reached St. Peter's . . . Our arrival was a cause of great joy to the Catholics, who had never before seen a Priest or Bishop in those remote regions; they manifested a great desire to assist at divine worship, and to approach the Sacraments of the Church . . . the Catholics of St. Peter's amounted to one hundred and eighty-five, fifty-six of whom we baptized, administered Confirmation to eight, communion to thirty-three adults, and gave the nuptial benediction to four couples.

Bishop Loras and Father Pelamourgues stayed at the home of Scott Campbell, the government interpreter at the fort. When he left, after a stay of two weeks, he promised to send a priest to care for the Indians and settlers of the area. The following year, 1840, Bishop Loras sent Father Lucien Galtier to be the resident pastor of St. Peter's.

Father Galtier was one of the seminarians who had come to the United States through the influence of Bishop Loras. Born in 1811 in Ardesches, France, he was ordained in St. Raphael's Cathedral, Dubuque on January 5, 1840. When he came to St. Peter's, Father Galtier, too, was welcomed in the Campbell home where he resided for over a year. In a letter written to Bishop Grace in 1864, he relates his experiences in first coming here.

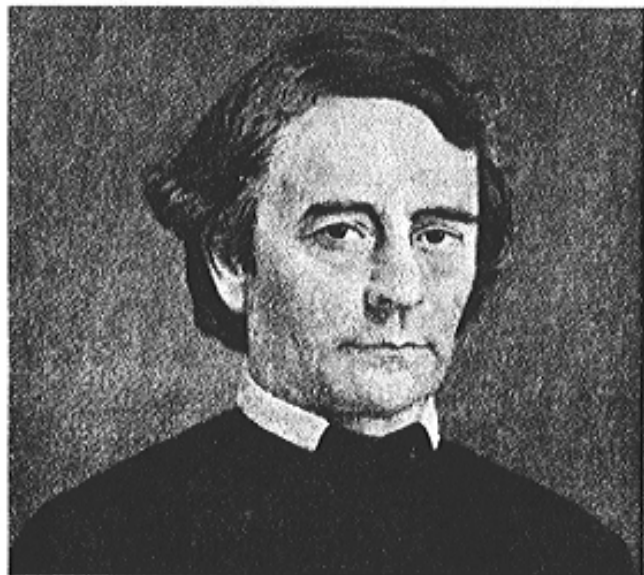
On the 20th day of April, 1840, in the afternoon, a St. Louis steamboat, the first of the season, arrived at Dubuque, bound for St. Peter's and Fort Snelling. Right Reverend Dr. Loras immediately came to me

and told me that he desired to send me towards the upper waters of the Mississippi. There was no St. Paul at that time; there was on the site of the present city but a single log house, occupied by a man named Phelan, and steamboats never stopped there.

The boat landed at the foot of Fort Snelling, then garrisoned by a few regular soldiers under command of Major Plimpton . . . there were only a few houses on the St. Peter side and but two on the side of the fort . . . On the Fort Snelling side I had under my charge, besides some soldiers, six families - - Resche, Papin, Quinn, Campbell, Bruce and Resico; and on the St. Peter side, besides some unmarried men in the employ of the Company, five families - - Faribault, Martin, Lord and two Turpins . . .

Initially, Father Galtier used his room at the Campbells as a chapel where he offered Mass. He later built and dedicated on November 1, 1841, a log chapel which was to become the first cathedral of the Diocese of St. Paul. It was after this that he moved to the Mendota side of the river where a small house was given to him by Jean B. Faribault. Apparently, the one room cabin was a frail structure, for it collapsed one night in the summer of 1842. Moving temporarily to Faribault's home Father Galtier began work on a new chapel. This chapel, the first Church of St. Peter, was blessed by Father Galtier on October 2, 1842; it served as a combined chapel and dwelling. It was not much of a building, being only twenty by forty feet and having only a few small windows, but it did have a little bell which was blessed on October 29. Interestingly enough, the altar from this chapel is still preserved at the museum of the St. Paul Seminary.

The altar, a rough cupboard about three and a half feet high, six feet wide and two and a half feet deep, was presented to the diocese in 1908 by Eugene and Jean Baptiste LeMay. Father William Busch, professor of history at the St. Paul Seminary, traced the origin of the altar, and in 1916 proved that it indeed was the altar from the Mendota Chapel of 1842. At that time, too, he located what to all appearances was the tabernacle belonging to that same altar. It was found in the attic of the present church and apparently was used during Holy Week as the repository for the Blessed Sacrament.



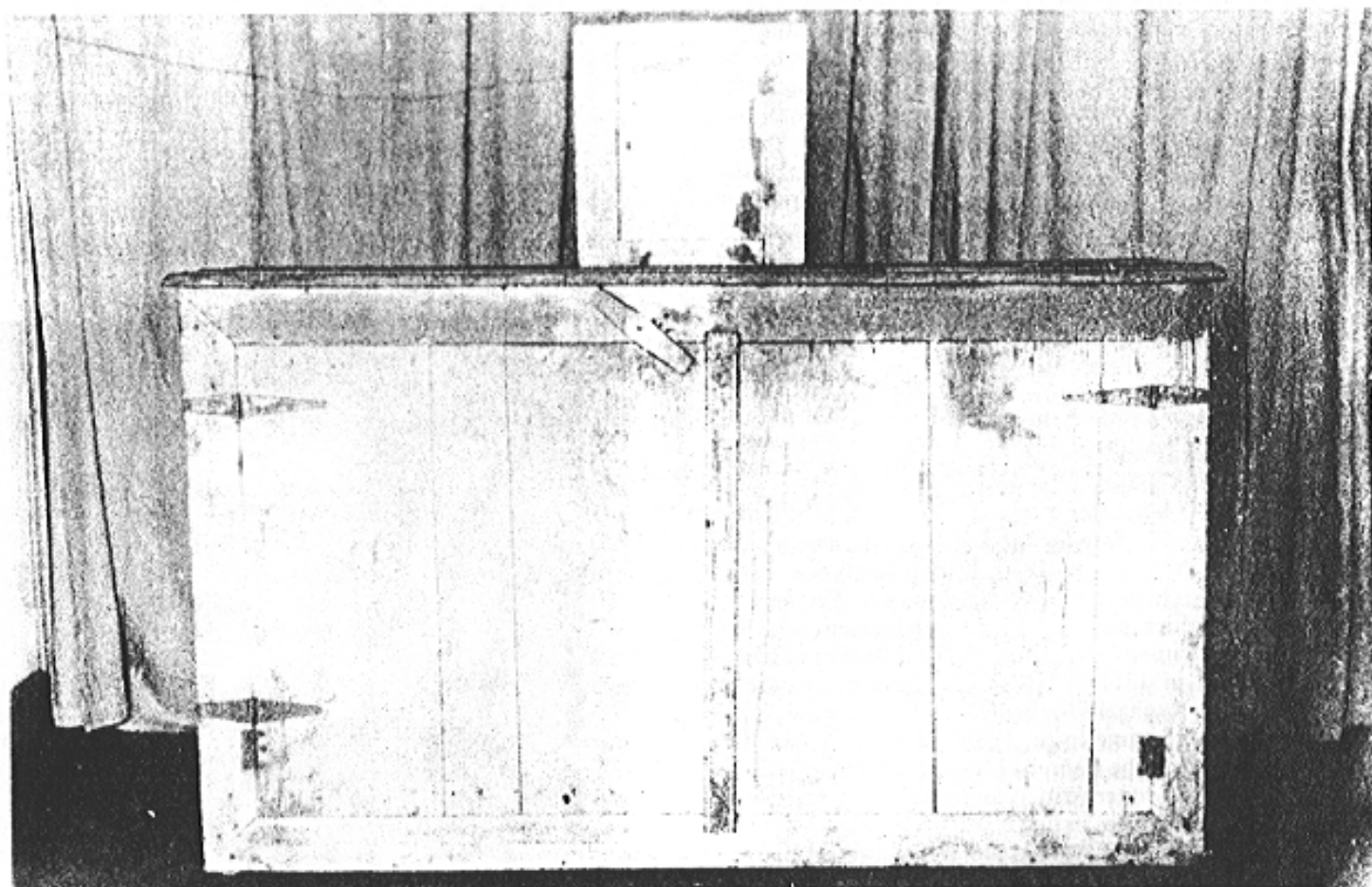
**Rev. Lucien Galtier
First Pastor in the Diocese
1840-1844**



St. Peter's Log Church

Father Galtier stayed at St. Peter's until May 1844. He also cared for Catholics at Fort Snelling as well as at St. Paul, Pig's Eye, St. Croix Falls, Lake St. Croix, Willow River, Chippewa River and Lake Pepin. Despite his good work, Father Galtier found life as a missionary difficult.

The frontiersmen were frequently crude, recalcitrant, independent and heedless of his admonitions. In 1845 he returned to France, but came again to the midwest two years later to serve in the Diocese of Milwaukee.



Altar from log church above



Reverend Augustine Ravoux

Father Galtier's work at St. Peter's was continued by Father Augustine Ravoux who had been working with the Indians in Minnesota since 1841. Father Ravoux's desire to be a missionary to the Sioux had prompted him to utilize every opportunity to study their language and customs. Many of his insights are recorded for us in a collection of his reminiscences and memoirs wherein he speaks of their religious practices, their daily life and his personal experience with them. He also translated into the Sioux tongue a book of hymns, prayers and catechetical instructions entitled **The Path to the House of God**, which was used by the Indians in worship and study. Father Ravoux, too, had come to Minnesota through the prompting of Bishop Loras. He was born on January 11, 1815, at Langeur, in Auvergne, France and was ordained with Father Galtier.

When Father Ravoux came to St. Peter's, sixty-seven Catholics were under his care at Mendota, fifty more at Fort Snelling and two hundred and ten at or near St. Paul. Father Ravoux made the 1842 chapel dwelling his headquarters. From there he cared for the Catholics that Father Galtier had under his charge and continued, insofar as possible, his work among the Indians. In the little chapel he regularly taught the catechism to ten or twelve children for an hour a day during that first fall and winter. There, too, he celebrated Mass for his parishioners including some of the soldiers from the Fort who crossed the river when it was frozen.

In 1846, Ravoux celebrated a midnight Mass at Mendota on Christmas, the holy day referred to by the Indians as the "big handshaking day." People came from some distance for the ceremony - some driving their sleighs up the river on the ice some six or eight miles.

In his memoirs he writes:

Christmas Day at Midnight Mass, the chapel of St. Peter, which is 20 by 40, was crowded; and (in addition) in a room from which the altar can be seen,

there were about 20 persons. There were several good singers who sang hymns for an hour and half before Mass. For four hours the chapel was filled. During the holiday season about 30 persons received the sacraments.

That primitive church remained standing even after the stone church was built. It served as a rectory and then for a time as a school under the direction of Mr. Deautinet. In 1869 it was torn down to make way for the railroad that passed through the village.

While alternately residing in Mendota and St. Paul, Ravoux initially celebrated Mass for two consecutive Sundays at Mendota and one in St. Paul. Later, as St. Paul continued to grow, he reversed the procedure.

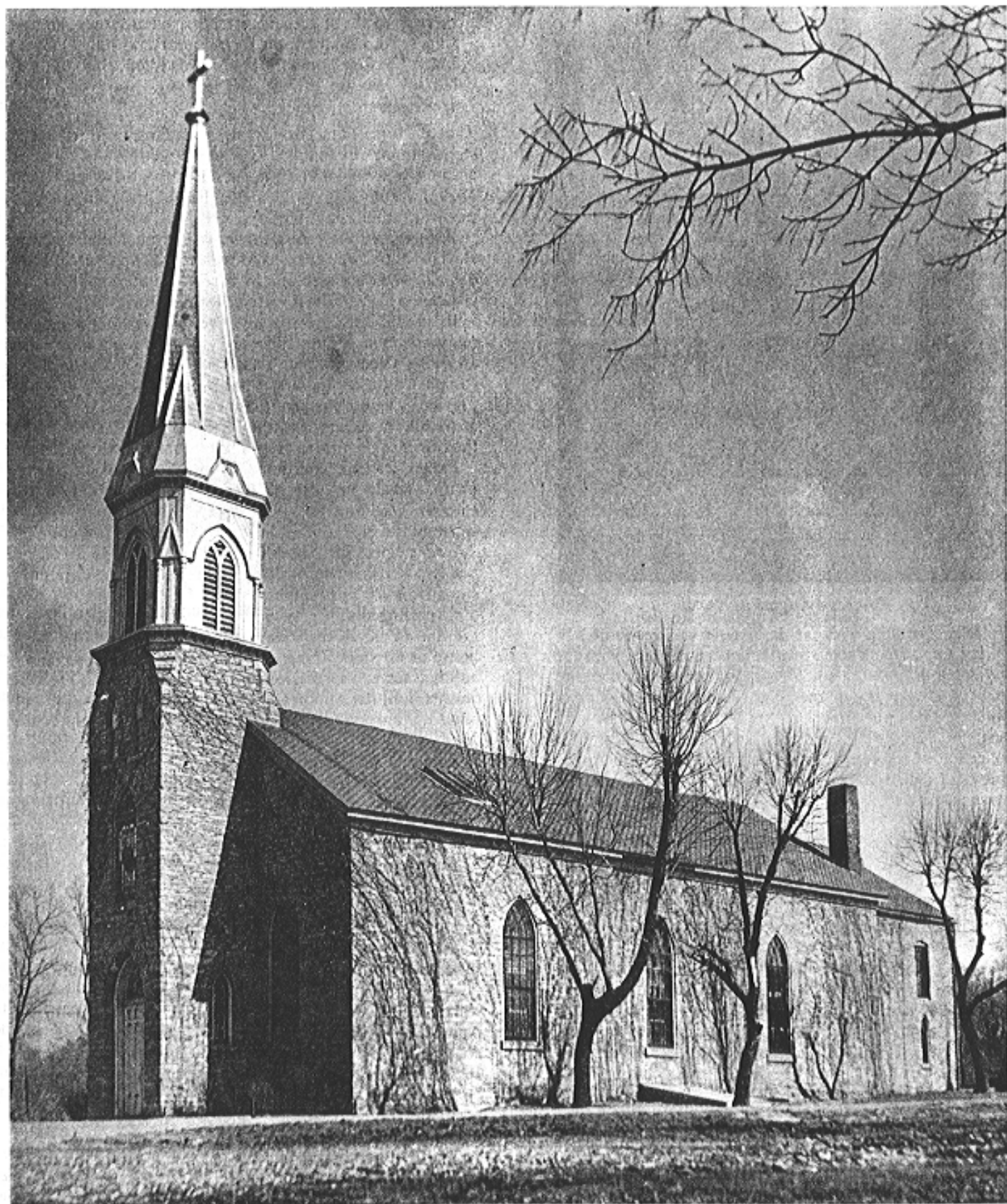
In 1849, as growth in the midwest continued, reorganization of the dioceses was again necessary. In 1850 the Diocese of St. Paul was established with Rev. Joseph Cretin as its first bishop. Though St. Paul was previously within the jurisdiction of Milwaukee, the priests at Mendota, recognizing the likelihood of St. Paul being the center of the future diocese, cared for the people there.

Father Ravoux continued to be of service to Bishop Cretin and the new diocese, procuring land for the future cathedral, serving as Vicar General and supporting the spiritual life of Catholics in the area. At the same time he did not neglect his parishioners at Mendota. In 1853, he and his parishioners built our present structure, digging stone from a nearby quarry along the banks of the river, and splitting shingles by hand to cover the roof. No doubt they put to use all their pioneer skills in constructing their house of worship. The present sacristy, a small two-story adjunct, served as a rectory for Father Ravoux and his successors until the woodframe rectory was built. The cost of building the church was \$4,425.80. Some of the contributors to the structure were the following: Alexander Faribault, \$500; Henry H. Sibley (for Pierre Chouteaux & Co.), \$200; H. H. Sibley, \$75; Fort Snelling officers and soldiers, \$300; Gamel, for a bell, \$130; Rt. Rev. Bishop Cretin, \$100. By 1856, the edifice was paid for and the parish free of debt. Its continued use even to this day joins us to the early pioneers in a special way and prompts us to emulate their courage and faith.

Exteriorly the church remains much the same as it was in 1853. But many changes were made interiorly. Rather than scatter the history of the church building throughout these pages, we will mention later changes and additions now. It's difficult to determine when the present high altar was installed. A secondary source states that Father Anatole Oster installed it in 1858. However, in view of the changes made later, one wonders whether this can be true. In 1877 Father A. Payette added side galleries resembling opera seats to the rear of the church with stairs leading to each side.

In 1887 Father Duane made further changes. Since a rectory had been built in 1881, Father Duane, no longer needing the two-story adjunct as living quarters, formed the sacristy-sanctuary from that space.

Other renovation also occurred at that time. A new steeple and belfry were built, (the original was destroyed in a storm), the side galleries were removed, and new stations of the cross were erected. In 1902 Father Martin Mahoney removed the center aisle and installed new pews with two sides aisles. He also elevated the floor some three or four feet at the entrance to the church to provide a better view from the back, and to gain a larger seating capacity, built the choir loft. A furnace was installed at this time as well, apparently the first that the church had.



Two years later Monsignor Oster installed the stained glass windows which are still in use. The high altar was already present by this time as can be seen from pictures dating back to that period. Father Patrick O'Connor, in 1909, obtained new stations of the cross (the ones presently in use), and installed the side altars and statues. About this time also new walks and steps leading to the village were laid. Finally, in 1940 brown wallboard was placed on the walls.

From that time on little was changed in the church until a new steeple had to be built, the old one being destroyed in a severe windstorm on July 20, 1951. The new steeple and bell tower were dedicated on March 28, 1954, by Archbishop John G. Murray. In addition, a new heating plant was installed at that time.

Returning to the pastorate of Father Ravoux, we note that the population of Mendota remained almost static during his time here. At one point, however, the boun-

daries of St. Peter's had to be clarified due to an error in surveying. The following letter, by Father Ravoux to Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, no doubt helped settle that problem.

Mendota September the 13th 1855

Sir

I request the Hon. Secretary of War to excuse me for taking the liberty of writing to him, though I have not the honor of knowing him. I am a catholic missionary, who, for several years have been resident at a short distance from Fort Snelling, M. T., on the St. Peter's or Minnesota River. I write to you to ask you a favor by which many will be indebted to you, and I hope that almighty God in the name and for the glory of whom I ask you that favor will reward you even in this life for your good deed towards a numerous congregation of Christians and a missionary who 11 years ago left his country and all his friends to announce the good tidings of Christianity.

You know, sir, that about 220 acres of land were granted by Congress to be bought by the inhabitants of Mendota at government price of \$1.25 and that a portion of the land was reserved for the use of the ferry at Fort Snelling near Mendota. It is now two years since Co. Lee then commanding officer at Fort Snelling marked the line of the reservation, and that one officer sent out by the government surveyed that portion of land according to his direction. But a few months after, the line of the reservation was changed, and were inclosed in the new one my dwelling house and my chapel which were erected 13 or 14 years ago, my new church (a stone building), my garden, and a grave yard that was fenced many years ago. Having been informed that it is in your power to replace the line of the reservation where it was before please have the kindness to do it and you will oblige us very much.

Respectfully, Sir, your obedient servant

A. Ravoux, V. G.

Hon Jefferson Davis
Secretary of War

Letters were not necessary for communicating with the bishop, however. He was living at the brick house on Wabasha Street that served as a cathedral and episcopal residence. Since there were no tall buildings between there and Mendota, the bishop could inform Father Ravoux of the need for his presence by flying a flag from the window of the upper story. Father Ravoux could see it with a field glass and make his way to St. Paul. Father Ravoux remained at St. Peter's until 1857. Thereafter he continued to serve the people of our diocese for many years, recruiting, for example, new priests from France to come to Minnesota. In 1887 he was made a Domestic Prelate. He died in 1906 at age 91.

Father Ravoux's successor at St. Peter's was Reverend Anatole Oster. Father Oster was born in Strasburg, Alsace in 1834. In 1839 he moved to Schelesdadt until he was 20 years old when he came to Minnesota on June 16, 1854. As a seminarian he travelled throughout the Northwest with Bishop Cretin, serving as a German interpreter. He was ordained in 1856 and on February 24, 1857 he was ap-

pointed pastor of St. Peter's parish. He served here until 1859, caring for the little flock clustered around the trading post and fort and nourishing the faith of this primitive community. We will hear more about Father Oster later because he served a second time as pastor in his later years.

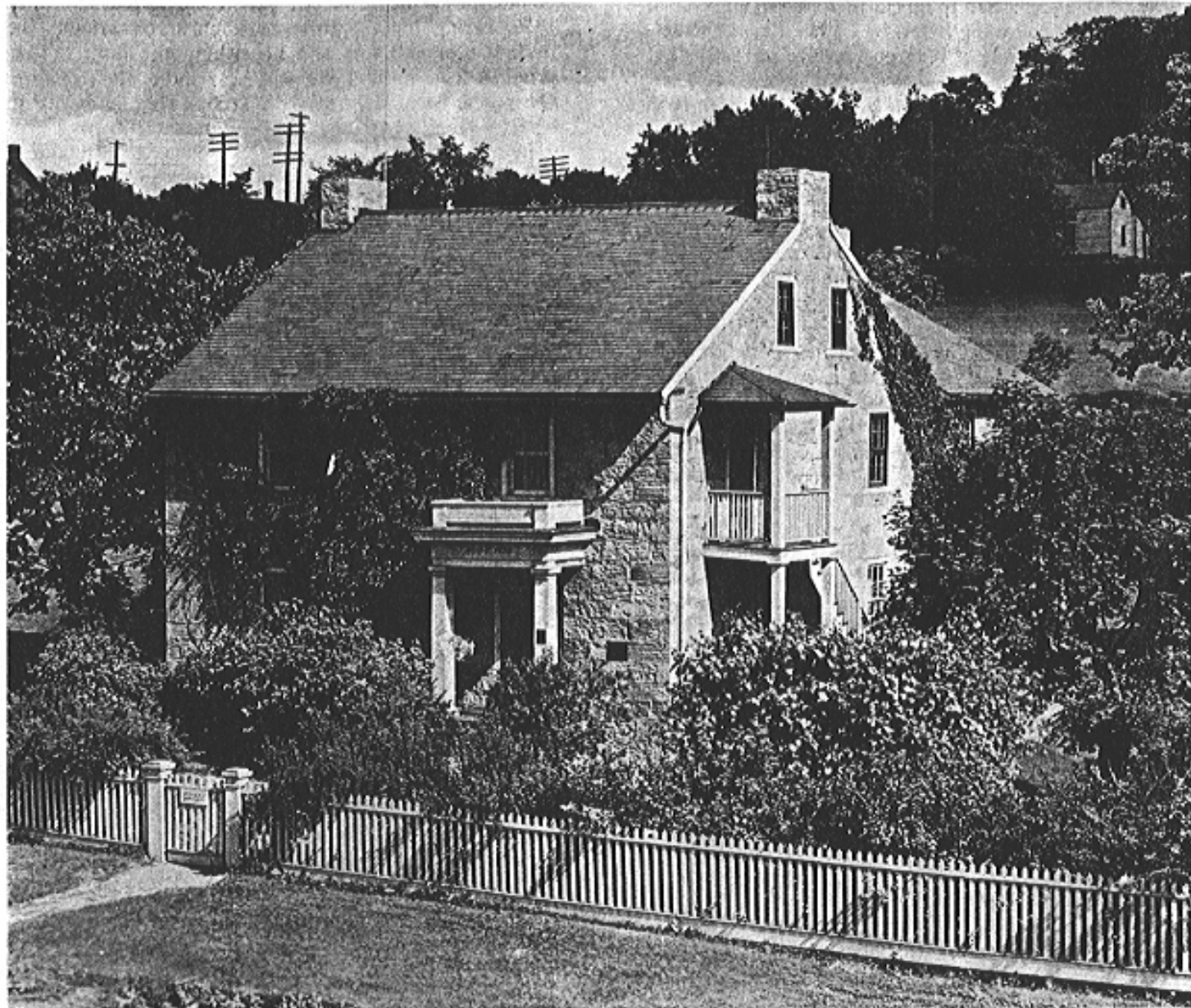
Father Oster was succeeded by Reverend Claude J. Robert, who served this parish from 1859 until 1866. Although the village remained a small rural community, there was a link with the growing St. Paul through the cable ferry that spanned the river. The ferry had been in existence as early as 1839. In 1860 it was purchased by Mr. Sibley and operated by Treffe Auge. He, in turn, purchased the ferry from Mr. Sibley in 1865, operated it for 35 years, then sold it to C. J. Clarksen and Son who operated it until the completion of the bridge in 1926.



Reverend Anatole Oster (center)

All of the priests who served St. Peter's were involved in the religious education of both the adults and the young people in the parish. Nevertheless, there was a strong desire to establish a school for the parishioners so that knowledge and love of Christ might take deeper root in the hearts of the children. It was characteristic of pioneer priests that they wished to have a "sisters school" in their parish; the Mendota priests were no exception. Father Claude Genis who came to St. Peter's in 1866 was instrumental in bringing the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet to Mendota.

The school, called the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, was located at the Henry H. Sibley house. The house had been built in 1836 and enlarged in 1843. After the Civil War it was sold to the diocese, and they opened the school there in 1868. The Sibley parlor served as the main school room and double doors led to another room



Sibley House

which had been Mr. Sibley's office. A parlor where music lessons were given was arranged in the entrance hall. A chapel and dormitory were located upstairs.

The school was model of unique cooperation between the diocese and the school district. While relying on the parishioners of St. Peter's for enrollment at the convent school (where the girls were taught), the Sisters also staffed the school owned by the school district (where the boys were taught). It served as a model for the famous "Faribault plan" in education. The fact that some trustees of the school district at that time were parishioners of St. Peter's no doubt facilitated the arrangement.

Some of the details of the arrangement can be garnered from the following letter written by Mr. Sibley.

Mendota is the oldest settlement in the state. It bore the name of St. Peter's, as did the river at the mouth of which it is situated, until some years after my arrival in 1834. There was a trading station there at that time composed of a half dozen or more log huts. In 1836, I built the stone dwelling I occupied for nearly a quarter of a century, which is still standing in good repair, and which is the oldest private residence in Minnesota. In 1862, being in command of the

Military District of Minnesota during the Indian War, my headquarters were established in St. Paul, and I removed in December of that year to this city, and a year or two afterwards I sold the old homestead to the Catholic Sisters, who still reside there and have a school in the building . . . The original Catholic chapel at the base of the hill where the stone church now stands, was the first structure built exclusively for religious services. After the stone church was erected and consecrated, I commenced the construction of another stone building for a place of worship for the Protestant families in the village, of which there were several. I completed the edifice at my own expense, the cost being about \$3,250. The volunteers from Fort Snelling, during the years of the war of rebellion, used to resort in large numbers to Mendota, and occasioned so much tumult and disorder that many of the families left the place, and as the building I had erected for worship was no longer frequented, I sold it to the trustees of the school district for a school house, and it is now used for that purpose.

When the school opened in January of 1869 there were three Sisters present. Mother Pauline LeMay, Sister

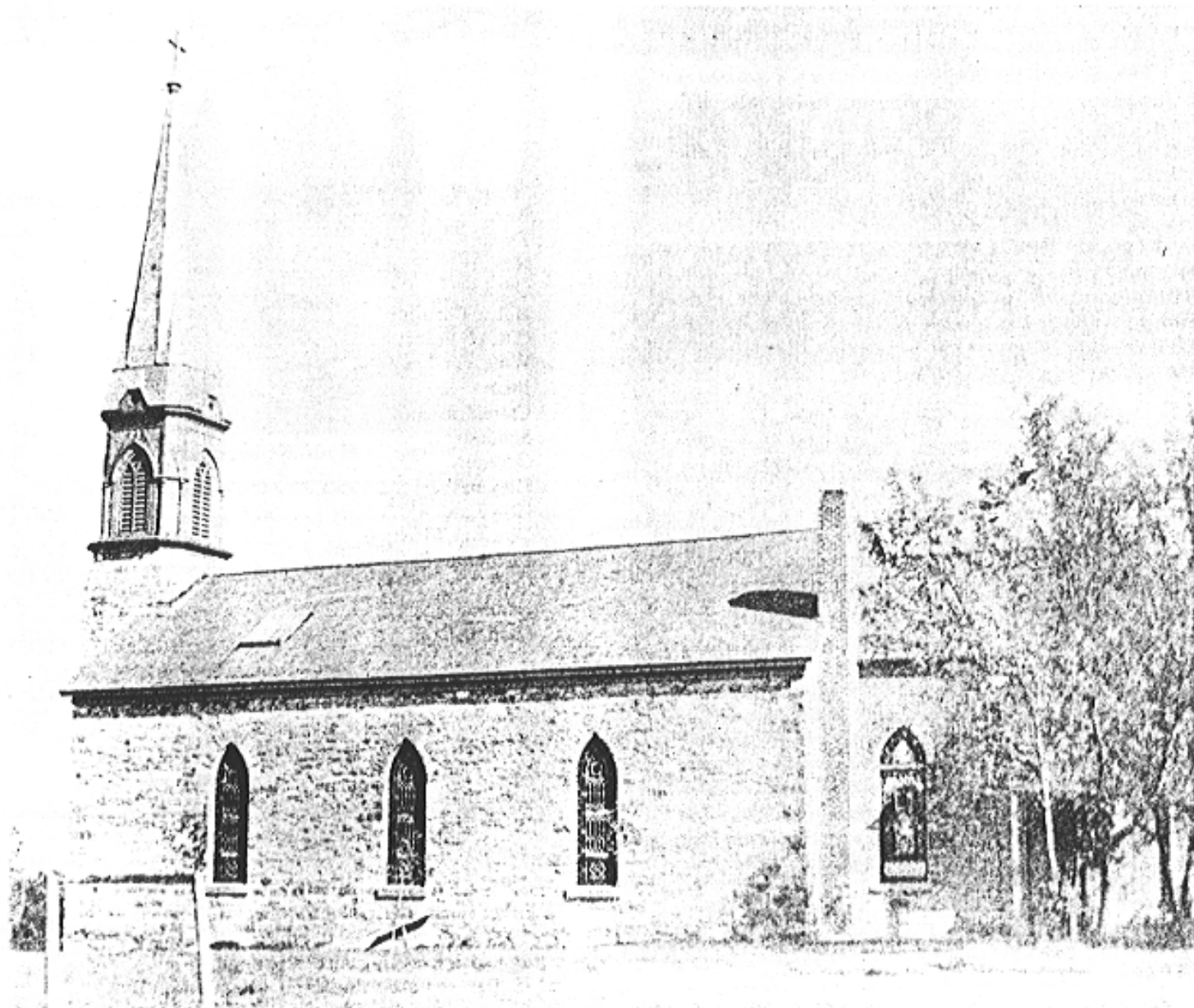
Ignatius Loyola Cox and Sister Columba Auge. The sisters remained at Mendota until June, 1879 when they left because of declining enrollment and financial difficulties. But a new institution took its place: the Catholic Directory for 1880 lists under the heading of Charitable Institutions an Industrial School for Girls, staffed by the Sisters of Mercy. However, after 1883 this is no longer mentioned.

The Mendota Convent School was not spectacularly successful, at least financially, but it was the source of inspiration to hundreds of pioneer children and as such it deserves recognition. Two of the famous pupils were Timothy Corbett, later to be Bishop of Crookston, and Thomas Edward Shields, who later became a priest noted for his pioneer work in education. In his book *The Dullard*, Father Shields immortalized one of his instructors in a way no teacher wishes to be immortalized. Father Shields, a sensitive intellectual, clashed headon with the "educational system." Perhaps his experiences at the Mendota School prompted him to initiate needed reforms in education. When St. Peter's school was built in 1956, it was dedicated to his memory. Some of his relatives still reside in the area and can supply a fuller and more detailed history of his life work.

In 1881, shortly after the Mendota school had closed, Father William P. Murray, who stayed here for only a brief time, was able to construct a rectory. Prior to this the priests lived in the present sacristy-sanctuary area of the church. A small cubby hold, accessible by ladder, led to the upper floor where the sleeping quarters were probably located.

We are rapidly approaching the turn of the century at this point in our history. But rather than trace year by year the events of normal parish life, let us highlight some events typical of parishes at that time. Our source for the information for this period stems principally from notes and records kept by Father Oster. He served the parish during its very early period i.e. from 1857-1859 and also served some 50 years later from 1902-1908. Between his two periods at St. Peter's, he served at the Cathedral and other parishes in the Diocese, acted as Vicar General in 1867 and was made a Domestic Prelate in 1899.

Quite an affair occurred on September 29, 1903, the day set aside as the 50th anniversary of the construction of the church. Former pastors and neighboring clergy were invited to attend the celebration which began with a Mass at 10:30 AM. Father Claude Genis, a former pastor, was the celebrant, while Father Thomas Duane, another former



Note Hitching Posts

pastor, preached the sermon in which he praised the pioneer zeal of the first priests in the area. Many priests and parishioners attended the event and were no doubt pleased at the performance of the choir, under the direction of Lillian Boudette. Following the Mass, the ladies of the parish served a dinner on the parish lawn where old acquaintances were renewed and new ones formed. The affair was concluded by a sermon delivered in French by Father Genis at 2:30, followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

About that time also Father Oster had the cemetery surveyed and a map made. The first recorded burial, that of Olivier Emile Feribot (Faribault), took place on October 10, 1840. The site for the burial was probably the present cemetery, since by 1855 the cemetery had already been in existence for some years, and was even fenced in. At any rate, by Father Oster's time, inadequate records and improper platting had caused a great deal of confusion as to ownership of the graves. Consequently, the survey, which took three weeks to finish, became very important. As a sidelight, we notice even today that we are occasionally plagued by the confusion originating from the early times.

The following announcement made on November 8, 1903, illustrates another kind of confusion. Parking space then, as now, was precious.

To prevent trouble and injustice, those who have hitching posts for their own use will please identify them to me. Only a few posts planted by Father Mahoney are public property. Those bought and planted by individual parishioners belong to them.

Horses, of course, were the principal means of transportation. In 1905, Father Oster received bids from the carpenters of the area for constructing a stable. The job was to include both the foundation and the stable itself. It remained till the 1940's when it caught fire, was partially burned, and finally torn down.

A weekly aspect of parish life was the religious education of the children. Classes were ordinarily held after services on Sunday, particularly in preparation for the sacraments. On June 29, 1903, 28 boys and 30 girls received Holy Communion for the first time. The following year, on April 28, Bishop James McGolrick of Duluth administered the sacrament of Confirmation. This was the first time the sacrament was conferred in seven years and a large class of 126 received the seal of the Spirit in their hearts.

Sermons during this time were frequently delivered in either French or English and sometimes in both. The music on solemn occasions consisted of Gregorian chants and prayers. On less solemn occasions, popular hymns were sung. (A few copies of those old hymnals are still kept — perhaps some of you might recognize them.)

In 1906 a new organ was installed at the cost of \$300. A concert given by Mr. William F. Markoe was held at the town hall in June of that year to pay for the organ. It turned out to be spectacularly unsuccessful. Only \$18.33 was realized and \$5 of that was paid to Mr. Markoe for his services.

The following financial report from 1906 reflects the life style of parishes at that time.

Financial Report of 1906

Dr.

To Balance on hand	\$535.71
.. Pew Rents	769.08
.. Plate Collections	183.00
.. Collection for Seminary	72.25
.. .. for Orphans	53.00
.. .. Holy Father	32.00
.. .. Holy Land	5.82
.. .. Prop. of Faith	28.15
.. Proc. of Festiv.	177.35
.. fuel col.	48.80
.. other sources	226.75
.. Grave Yard	86.00

\$2217.91

Bills unpaid	\$ 483.95
Due to Clergy	400.00

Cr.-By Salary of Pastor	\$ 400.00
.. By Salary of Sexton	305.83
.. Repairs on Church	10.00
.. Repairs on Residence	10.00
.. Organist	100.00
.. House Furniture	40.00
.. Church Furniture	210.00
.. Wine, candles & oil	25.00
.. Insurance	7.50
.. Cathedraticum	60.00
.. Seminary	70.00
.. Orphans	60.00
.. Holy Father	32.00
.. Holy Land	5.82
.. Diocesan Missions	28.15
.. Incidental Expenses	289.70
.. Crib	36.19
.. Lumber	39.60
.. Cash on hand	357.46

\$2217.91

Due on Pew Rents	\$ 850.16
Note	60.00

Other items, too, point to reflect inflation over the years. In 1904 the rectory was repainted, the roof reshingled, the altar and loft-railing also repainted - - all at the cost of \$175. Pew rental at that time was an important source of income and Sunday donations of 50 cents were considered generous.

By the turn of the century the pioneer period of the church in this area had come to a close. It was fittingly capped off with the golden jubilee celebration of Monsignor Oster's ordination to the priesthood on December 13, 1906. By that time he was one of the few remaining pioneer clergymen who had come to this part of the county. No doubt the celebration was long remembered by the residents of Mendota. Even though the weather was inclement that day and the roads in bad repair, a large gathering of people attended the celebration. The day opened with a 10:30 AM Mass. Bishop Joseph B. Cotter preached the sermon. A banquet at the village hall followed with Bishop John Shanley being the principal speaker.

While the celebration was indeed a personal tribute to Msgr. Oster, in a larger sense it honored all the pioneer priests who had spent their lives in service to God's people. Among them were men like Father Joseph Goiffon, Monsignor Oster's associate. In 1860, in returning from St. Paul to Pembina where he was stationed, he was caught in a blizzard. For five days he was exposed to the fury of the storm, and feeding upon his frozen horse he was able to stay alive. Some searchers found him and carried him to warmth and safety. He lost one leg below the knee and the ankle of the other, but survived. Later, he returned to St. Paul to serve with Monsignor Oster at St. Peter's.



Reverend Martin Mahoney

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST AT ST. PETER'S

1930 - Nov. 12 - at 2:00 AM Father Martin Mahoney wakened the village by ringing the church bell and called them to put out a fire threatening the church. A bucket brigade carrying water from the rectory well doused the flames.

1935 - U. S. Department of Interior declared St. Peter's Church an historical building worthy of preservation.

1936 - St. Peter's Parish Hall built by Father William J. Harrington.

1940 - Celebration of Parish Centennial.

1946 - The Cana Retreats.

In 1946 St. Peter's became the center for Cana Retreats. The Cana and Pre-Cana days were sponsored by the Archdiocesan Committee on Family Life. Monsignor Richard T. Doherty of the St. Paul Seminary conducted the retreats aimed at deepening a Christian appreciation for the sanctity of marriage and family life.

St. Peter's remained the retreat center until 1958 or 1959 after which they were held at the various deaneries of the Archdiocese. Over 12,000 couples participated in the 375 retreats that were held at St. Peter's.

ST. PETER'S SCHOOL AND CONVENT

In the 1950's, new school construction held a high priority in most parishes of the United States and St. Peter's was no different. Though the parish had not supported a school since the early days of its history and though it had remained a small provincial parish since then, the time appeared ripe in the 1950's for a new venture in education. Father Ernest Muellerleile provided the impetus for the construction, staffing and financing of the proposed school. As early as 1946, he had been acquainted with the Precious Blood Sisters of O'Fallon, Missouri. In 1953 formal application was made for the Precious Blood Sisters to come to St. Peter's. In February of 1955 they accepted the request and for the following two summers taught religion to about 150 children. In January of that year the school drive was opened by a Golden Plate Dinner that was well received by the parishioners. In May of 1956 the ground breaking ceremony for the school took place. The proposed structure initially was to cost \$300,000 and was to be used as both a school (8 classrooms) and convent.

On November 25, 1956, the laying of the cornerstone occurred; and the celebration began with a sung Mass at 10:30 AM. Monsignor James Reardon, pastor of the Basilica of Mary, Minneapolis, was scheduled to preach, but was unable to attend. After the service, a procession to the site of the new school took place where the cornerstone was blessed. A parish dinner concluded the event.

The contents of the cornerstone included something of the church as a whole, namely the restored Holy Week Book, program of Liturgical Week, and pictures of Pius XII, Archbishop Murray, and Archbishop Brady; something from the community, namely, common coins and stamps and current Catholic and secular newspapers; something of the parish, namely a brief history of the parish, the current financial report, names of families, donors, and members of the building committee together with pictures of the parish priests; and finally something of the sisters, namely a brief history of the Precious Blood Sisters, a scroll of the summer school 1956, and photographs of the children.

By January 1957 the school building fund had reached \$127,000 and although the actual construction cost rose to the \$400,000 level, it appeared that the parish backed the concept of a new school. The architects for the building were George H. Carter and Robert A. Sundt. The general contractor was the Keller Construction Co. of Winona; the Electrical contractor, Tiesco Electric Co., St. Paul and the consulting engineers, Bird, Bird and Associates, Osseo, Minn. The structure was formally dedicated in the summer of 1957 to the memory and ideals of Father Thomas Edward Shields. The dedication began on the Feast of St. Peter, Saturday, June 29 and lasted until July 1, the Feast of the Precious Blood, uniting the parish and the sisters in a very special way.

On September 3, 1957, the new school opened under the direction of three sisters and an enrollment of 112 pupils. Enrollment continued to increase during the following years reaching its peak in the mid 60's when over 300 students were enrolled. Father Muellerleile did not get a chance to continue his involvement with St. Peter's and the new school because he was transferred in 1957 to St. Catherine's, Redwood Falls, Minnesota, and was replaced by Father Harvey F. Egan.

From 1957 until the convent was built in 1960, the Sisters lived in the school building. The convent, now used as a rectory, remains a model of architectural beauty and

function. Father Egan began plans for its construction shortly after his arrival at St. Peter's. Eleven individual rooms for the Sisters, together with an oratory, community room, refectory, kitchen, laundry and utility rooms were provided. The building sets on native rock and is constructed almost entirely above grade. The walls were made of insulating concrete block, faced on the exterior with Lannon stone and on the interior with plaster, concrete block or paneled redwood.

The architect for the convent was Kenneth Walijarvi, the structure engineers were Jacus and Amble and the mechanical and electrical contractors were Snyder, Palmer and Toussaint. The building, together with landscaping, architects fees, etc., cost \$134,000. It was dedicated to the memory of Mr. Richard C. Lilly, a generous benefactor of St. Peter's parish. The Sisters continued to live in the convent until 1973, serving the school and the people of St. Peter's.

Ironically, St. Peter's school was fated to undergo the same problems of the school located at the Sibley House. By the latter sixty's, rising costs in education, shortage of religious personnel and rethinking of parish priorities caused a decline in enrollment and deficit spending. Attempts were made by priests, sisters and parishioners to reverse this trend. In 1969, for example, they procured two school sisters of Notre Dame to join two remaining Precious Blood Sisters. The following year, joint staffing of the school by the two communities continued, with the Notre Dame community assuming the administrative responsibilities. At the end of that term both communities withdrew and during the school year 1971-1972 the school was staffed by four sisters of St. Joseph of Crookston. Because of shortage of personnel and other prior commitments, the St. Joseph Sisters could not continue staffing St. Peter's School, and the parish, deciding that the cost of an all lay faculty was beyond their means, discontinued the school.

Recent Trends

Religious Education

While the nation's schools were undergoing a crisis during the turbulent '60's, Catholics were discovering new forms of religious education — forms that stressed the centrality and importance of the family in the training and education of children, forms that utilized the liturgy to initiate the youth in an appreciation of the mystery of Christ and forms that incorporated the insights of psychology in the methodology of instruction.

In other words St. Peter's commitment to religious education did not wane with the closing of the school. Coordinators of religious education had been active in the parish long before the school closed and long before it became a common practice elsewhere.

Presently the parish employs a staff of two full time and two part time coordinators. They have provided extensive planning and organization in implementing religion programs for the parish and in aiding the parents as teachers in the classroom. Programs from the preschool level to the adult level have been provided using imaginative approaches to bring parishioners close to Christ and closer to one another. No doubt they will continue to provide leadership in the parish during the months and years ahead.

St. Peter's Parish Council

While new forms of education made their appearance in the wake of Vatican Council II, organizational and structural changes also began to emerge.

Collegiality became a byword in the Church after the

Council, a byword applied to nearly every level of church organization.

On the parish level collegiality appeared in the form of parish councils — something new to the structure of Catholic parishes. The rationale for the establishment of parish councils was basically twofold.

First, the importance of lay leadership in parish life was stressed. The view of the Church as a people of God filled with the Spirit and possessing his gifts became more prominent than in the past.

Second, it was understood that no single individual could be expected to possess all the expertise needed in the operation of a parish to adequately reflect the viewpoints and attitudes of the parish as a whole.

Parish councils attempt to arrive at a consensus regarding priorities and policies that will enable parish life to flourish. St. Peter's Parish Council (began in 1968) has been an invaluable aid to the pastor, particularly in forming major decisions which affect the thrust and direction of the parish for the future.

The council, for example, has recently chosen the present site for future development over the Lexington Avenue site that had been purchased a few years back. The council has also determined to renovate part of the education building for a place of worship rather than to build a new structure at a much greater cost.

While parish councils are still in their infancy and, no doubt, need further refining, they have, nevertheless, proved to be a viable and essential structure for parishes nearing the 21st century.

Renovation of the Education Building

While we are proud of our 1853 church building and while we are committed to its continued use and maintenance, we have also recognized our need for a larger structure that is more adaptable to the liturgical needs of today.

After surveying the parishioners and discovering broad support for the project, the parish decided to renovate part of the education building into a place of worship.

With the help of the Building and Maintenance Committee and with the expertise of Kenneth Walijarvi and Associates, architects, a plan for the renovation was developed and construction began in June, 1974.

The plan incorporates seating space for 600 people, a small chapel for reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, confessionals with the option of screened or open confession, a baptistry and a mother's room. The area is also completely air conditioned, carpeted and furnished with modern pews.

The general contractor for the project was Kopp Bros., Inc., the electrical contractor, Tony Muska Electric and the mechanical contractor, The Snelling Company.

We hope that the new area will serve as a place of prayer and worship for St. Peter's parishioners for many years to come.

CONCLUSION

No parish history can adequately express the many moments of joy, heartbreak, crisis or resolution of conflict that occur in the lives of priests and parishioners.

Frequently we could find little information concerning even major events. Frequently, too, we had to present parish life in terms of buildings and finances because more accurate records were kept of these things than of other events of perhaps greater importance. Nevertheless, we hope these pages summarize the major events in the history of our parish so that we can come to an appreciation of our heritage while moving into the unknown future that lies ahead.